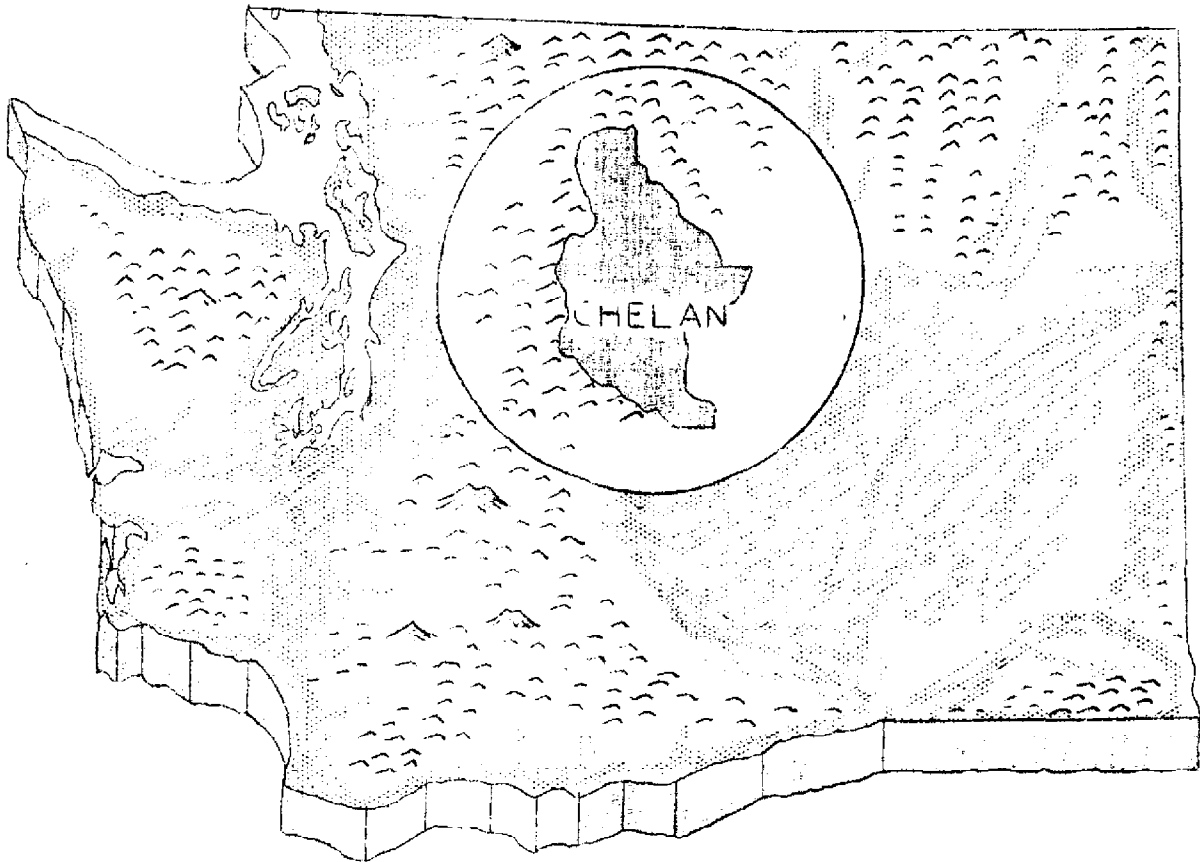


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CHELAN COUNTY AGRICULTURE

WASHINGTON

COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DATA SERIES
1956



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Agricultural Marketing Service
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WASHINGTON CROP AND LIVESTOCK REPORTING SERVICE
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FOREWORD

This book on Chelan County is one of an original series being devoted to the history and present nature of agriculture in each of the thirty-nine counties of the State of Washington. This project was initiated in 1956 through funds made available by Sverre N. Omdahl, Director, Washington State Department of Agriculture, 1948-56. State funds were matched by moneys from the United States Department of Agriculture under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946.

County agricultural data books are intended to serve a variety of needs. Continually changing conditions in a dynamic state such as Washington require constant planning by groups and individuals both in private enterprise and public service. Comprehensive knowledge of land resources, population and agricultural-economic trends in a local area such as Chelan County is of great value. This book will be useful for reference in public and private instruction by vocational agriculture and social studies teachers in Chelan County schools. It has been devised also to inform adults interested in knowing more about their immediate area, as well as persons and enterprises concerned with agricultural production and marketing or prospective settlement and investment in the county.

Carefully selected geographic facts, agricultural history, population trends and statistical data are included to give an over-all appreciation of Chelan County. The enumerations of the United States Censuses of Population and Agriculture since 1900 and recent estimates of the Washington State Census Board are summarized to give a perspective of development since the establishment of Chelan County in 1899. Facts on topography, soil, climate and forests which influence farming are integrated from surveys and reports of government agencies. Estimates of leading crops by years since 1939 by the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service provide a measure of the trend in the agriculture of the county farm industry.

Acknowledgment is accorded the professional work of several persons. Immediate direction was under Emery C. Wilcox, Agricultural Statistician in Charge, Estimates Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Supervision, research and cartographic illustration was performed by Dr. Woodrow R. Clevinger, Market Analyst, Washington State Department of Agriculture. Mr. Richard Perry, of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and Leonard W. Orvold, D. W. Barrowman and Christian A. Stokstad, Agricultural Statisticians, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture, gave valuable assistance. Vladimir Kovalik, University of Washington graduate student in geography, compiled most of the statistical tables and graphs. The clerical staff of the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service prepared tabular material for the book.

Joseph D. Dwyer, Director
Washington State Department of Agriculture

Olympia, Washington
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PART I

History of Chelan County Agriculture

Introduction

Chelan County, a land of scenic Cascade Mountains, irrigated valleys and Columbia River terraces, is located in north central Washington. It has a land area of 2,931 square miles (approximately 1,875,840 acres) and is third in size among the thirty-nine Washington counties. It is larger than the state of Delaware and over twice the size of Rhode Island. Wenatchee, the county seat, a city of 16,250, is located on the Columbia River in the southeastern corner of the county.

Chelan is the most specialized fruit growing county in Washington. It ranks second to Yakima in volume and value of apples, pears, cherries and apricots. It is also the second county in the nation in apples and is among the top fifty counties of America in cherries, pears, peaches and apricots. Chelan was third in Washington in value of farm products sold during 1954, with total sales of \$27,729,500. Of this sum, \$26,595,000 was received by Chelan growers for tree fruit, second highest fruit sales volume in the state. While farm production ranks high among the counties, the rural farm population of 8,900 ranks only eleventh. Farm income is above the state average because of the high value of production from the fruit farms. Agriculture as the main industry has been a leading influence in Chelan County's economic expansion and in its population growth.

History 1/

Chelan County was created by the Washington State Legislature, March 13, 1899, being organized from the northern portion of Kittitas County and the southwestern part of Okanogan. "Chelan" is an Indian name meaning "deep water", given to a large glacial lake which is a scenic feature. With the exception of a township line in the southeast, county boundaries follow rugged mountain divides such as the Cascade Crest, the Wenatchee Mountains and the Sawtooth Mountains. The entire eastern border is the Columbia River which gave early

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access to the mountainous area. The county was formed to serve the early livestock and fruit farmers of three Cascade Mountain valleys which drain eastward into the Columbia. Mountain barriers to the north, south and west, somewhat isolated these farmers from Okanogan and Ellensburg and led them to seek a county administered from Wenatchee, market and trade city on the Great Northern Railway. The inclusion of a large Cascade Mountain wilderness area between the Columbia River and the Cascade Crest made the new county one of the three largest in the state. Its longest north-south distance is about 90 miles and its greatest width is 60 miles east and west.

Western civilization began in Chelan County in 1811 when fur traders of the British Northwest Fur Company (later part of the Hudson's Bay Company) began traveling on the upper Columbia River. Brigades of trappers and traders plying river craft between Fort Okanogan, Fort Colville, western Canada and lower Columbia River posts such as Fort Vancouver, stopped along the river banks of the Chelan area and also trapped in the Chelan, Entiat and Wenatchee Valleys. David Thompson, a British explorer attached to the Northwest Fur Company explored the upper Columbia River Basin between 1807 and 1811 and presumably recorded the first observations of the Chelan area.

Fur traders made the first contact with the Wenatchi Indians who inhabited the Columbia River drainage now in Chelan County. The Wenatchi were semi-nomadic hunters, horsemen and river dwellers who had villages along the Columbia and Wenatchee Rivers and on Lake Chelan. They were an interior Salish language group closely related to the Okanogan, Kalispell, San Poil, Colville and Spokane Indians who lived along the Northern Columbia River. The Indians learned rudiments of agriculture from the fur traders and early missionaries.

Americans did not settle in Chelan County until after 1860. The territorial dispute between the United States and Britain had discouraged homesteading. American jurisdiction over the area was established after the Treaty of 1846 which ended British claims in north central Washington and established the Canadian border. However, hostility of the Yakima Confederacy of tribes prevailed until 1858 and U.S. Army orders prohibited white settlement in most eastern Washington areas between 1846 and 1859. A treaty between the United States and the Yakima Confederacy signed at Walla Walla in 1855 and ratified by Congress in 1859 brought more peaceful conditions. Large reservations--the Yakima and Colville--were established for the Indians. A small reservation, the Wapato, was subsequently established on Lake Chelan. Wenatchi Indians moved onto the reservations or were given land allotments.

1/ This historical summary has been derived from four sources:

- (1) Washington, A Guide to the Evergreen State, (American Guide Series), Writer's Program of the Works Project Administration, State of Washington. Sponsored by the Washington Historical Society, 1941.
- (2) Perry, Richard M. The Counties of Washington, Secretary of State, Olympia, Washington, 1943 (Mimeographed).
- (3) The Wenatchee Dairy World, Festival Edition, May 6, 1953, Wenatchee, Washington.
- (4) The Wenatchee Dairy World, "50th Anniversary Year Edition", July 3, 1955. Wenatchee, Washington.

The first white settlers were gold prospectors, cattlemen and missionaries. Cattlemen used routes through Chelan County to drive cattle to the gold fields of Canada and northern Washington. An important early arrival was the Catholic missionary, Father Respari, who came to the Wenatchee Valley in 1863. He was followed in 1883 by Father DeGrassi, who is credited with starting irrigation at Cashmere and teaching agriculture to Indians of that district.

Farm settlement in the Chelan County valleys was slow in getting underway. It was not until the 1880's, after construction of the Great Northern Railway through the Wenatchee Valley in 1892-93, that any appreciable agricultural settlement started. Before that, a limited amount of wheat and livestock moved on the Upper Columbia River by stern-wheel steamers. When the Great Northern line was built to Wenatchee, this settlement became an important point of transshipment from river vessel to rail transportation. Most homesteaders grew field crops of grain and hay for local markets and some livestock was driven overland to railroad points.

Largely by trial and error and through chance, homesteaders in north central Washington had discovered how well tree fruits such as apples and pears grew on valley irrigated plots. The excellent manner in which fruit grew in this mountain valley region had been demonstrated in the 1860's and 1870's in the Okanogan Valley to the north. There, Hiram F. "Okanogan" Smith planted an orchard of 1,200 trees near Oroville to become the founder of orchard farming in north central Washington. During the 1890's a few farmers in the Wenatchee Valley began selling boxes of apples commercially to buyers who shipped them by rail to Seattle. Apples of this early period were of varieties now largely obsolete--varieties such as Spitzenburg, Baldwin, Pearmain, Ben Davis, Wolf River and Arkansas Black.

By 1900 Chelan County had a population of 3,931 and through land development and an orchard planting boom in the next 10 years grew to 15,104 by 1910. This decade was active in building irrigation facilities, organizing fruit growers and expanding the marketing of Chelan County fruit.

The Wenatchee Land Development Company advertised and attracted several hundred new pioneers to the fruit growing industry. In the 1900-1910 period, private stock companies of land speculators and growers built irrigation ditches to expand the fruit growing acreage. The Highline, Gunn and Shotwell ditches were completed in the Wenatchee Valley during those years. An irrigated district was developed at Manson in the Chelan Valley. By 1905 the fruit industry began to take on its modern form. The Wenatchee Valley Fruit Growers Association was organized in 1905 for cooperative marketing of fruit crops. By 1908 a thousand carloads of fruit were moving out of Chelan County annually and in that year large shipments of apples went by rail to Seattle for export to Europe, Asia and New Zealand.

While there were fluctuations in the export volume of Chelan fruit, such as the 1914-1918 World War I period, the agricultural and commercial economy continued to grow. By 1930, the population reached 31,634. Improved rail service and highway communications across the Cascades improved marketing conditions. The economic base of the county began to expand after 1940 to include new types of employment in lumbering, mining, hydroelectric construction, food

processing and the electrical refining of metal. A key to new industries was the abundant hydroelectric power created by Grand Coulee and Rock Island Dams. Large new payrolls were created by the Aluminum Company of America plant near Malaga, the Holden Mining Company at Lake Chelan and the Rock Island Dam. Population grew by 5,000 during World War II years as industrial activity and food processing employment expanded. In 1955, Chelan County reached a population of 42,000 supported by agriculture and new industries.

The agricultural development of Chelan County has been encouraged and guided by several agencies and private enterprises. The Wenatchee Valley Fruit Growers Association and the Chelan Valley Fruit Growers Association improved the quality of fruit and the primary methods of handling fruit for outside markets. Guidance and technical assistance to growers in the improvement of varieties and fruit horticulture has been the important contribution of the Washington State College Tree Fruit Branch Experiment Station, established at Wenatchee in 1937. County Extension Agents based at Wenatchee have provided technical assistance in problems of horticulture and animal husbandry. General marketing assistance and the distribution of horticultural science information has been the function of the Washington State Horticultural Association, founded in 1904, the Washington State Apple Commission, the Washington State Fruit Commission and the Growers Clearing House.